ACTing UP All Over

March 1, 1997 By Jesse Heiwa Loving

At ACT UP's height in 1991, the direct-action movement existed in 54 cities in the United States and Puerto Rico (still-active chapters appear in red). Another 10 chapters functioned internationally. Listed below is only a tiny sample of the most creative or successful local actions that helped save many lives.

ACT UP/Rhode Island 1988: While dozens picket outside, six activists are arrested and strip-searched after taking over the state health director's office, protesting proposed mandatory HIV testing. Later, all proposals are rejected except forced testing of prisoners.

ACT UP/Boston 1990-93: "IV League" starts and runs underground needle exchange; later legalized and adopted by the state.

ACT UP/Philadelphia 1990-91: To counter rejection of state funding for a PWA nursing home, ACT UP occupies the vacant building. State funding finally secured; 40-bed home opens a year later, with ACT UP publicly thanked.

ACT UP/Cleveland 1991: ACT UP exposes deception of PWAs in a Case Western Reserve University clinical trial of a failed AIDS drug and notifies study participants. Enrollees drop out and the study is shut down.

ACT UP/ Chicago 1989: In a campaign for bilingual, multiracial city-bus posters on safer sex and clean needles, activists march through downton, then enter 100 buses, putting up their own posters. City later installs watered-down posters on buses.

ACT UP/St. Louis 1992: Demonstrators block door to a company offering "HIV-negative" photo ID cards. Activists infiltrate the voice-mail system and change outgoing message to say, "If you trust the card over a condom, chances are you may die of AIDS."

ACT UP/Kansas City 1991: Demonstration at the Beauty Unlimited hair salon protests the firing of an employee with AIDS; seven arrested for civil disobedience. The salon closes.

ACT UP/Atlanta 1993: In protest against inadequate services at a local hospital, ACT UP sets up a mock clinic on the hospital's lawn. After several more protests, hospital expands and modernizes AIDS clinic.

ACT UP/ New Orleans 1990: Protesting delays in getting AIDS care at the city hospital, 49 people are arrested at City Hall-the largest civil disobedience in New Orleans history. Results in expansion of services.

ACT UP/Little Rock 1991: After an editorial writer for *The Arkansas Democrat* writes that PWAs should stay away from him, stickers appear on newspaper boxes saying the writer is "Out of Order," reducing circulation among readers who think the boxes are malfunctioning.

ACT UP/Phoenix 1990: Outraged by *The Arizona Republic*'s AIDSphobic reporting, editorials and cartoons, demonstrators affix 10,000 condoms to the morning edition and march on the paper. Hostile editorials end.

ACT UP/San Francisco* 1994: Capping a four-year campaign protesting brutal conditions for women prisoners with AIDS, a banner suspended by helium balloons and condoms floats over the wall of Chowchilla Women's Prison while scores march outside. The campaign results in improved AIDS care and prevention education.

ACT UP/East Bay 1992: ACT UP/East Bay is instrumental in the formation of HIV/AIDS Patients Union at Qual Med (the Bay Area's second largest HMO), which eventually forces the HMO to provide "off-label" drugs to patients with AIDS.

ACT UP/Los Angeles 1988-89: Yearlong campaign of demonstration at the county hospital plus disruptions and civil disobedience protesting grossly inadequate AIDS care lead to inpatient AIDS ward and state-of-the-art outpatient HIV clinic.

**The ACT UP Network has disavowed a faction that in 1995 allegedly used intimidation tactics to take control of ACT UP/San Francisco and is said to repeatedly use personal violence; the new group opposes the sale or use of any antiretroviral drugs or Chinese herbal formulas.*

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